

[Ed Bell]

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From F. C. by

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Early Day Cowboy Tales and Experiences UVALDE COUNTY, DISTRICT #10

ED BELL

Sabinal, Texas.

"I was born in Redrock, Bastrop County, Texas January 5, 1857. My father was a farmer and a ranchman. I have been working stock since I could set on a horse. Sam Blalock is my first cousin and we bought our first pair of boots together. They were little, short boots with brass toes and red tops. We were sure proud of those boots, and I believe we gave about three dollars a pair for them.

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"I was born in a little two-room, log house with a hall between. And I have been riding regular after cattle since I was seven. When I was nine years old, I was out helping my father with the cattle and we had a stampede. They run right by our house and almost scared my mother to death. I guess there was about a thousand head. My father finally got hold of a red flag and run in ahead of them and got them checked. However there were several head killed.

"I went up the trail when I was 18 years old with a herd of cattle for Jim Allison. We had a pretty nice trip this time. It took us about four and a-half months to make the trip. We had a few little runs but our trip was a pleasant one. On the way back I had ridden one horse all the way from Kansas and when I got to Austin, I heard there was going to be a dance in Redrock that night. It was about thirty miles from Austin to Redrock, but I rode on in and it was a fine dance. My be t best girl was there. Her name was Miss Hettie Sorrell. C12 [??]

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We sure had a grand time.

"My father moved his cattle to Llano County and I stayed there with them about eighteen months or till they were sold. While I was there I lived alone part of the time in a little log cabin and most all the meat I had was venison. However, the last six months I was there a family by the name of Dixon lived with me and when my father sold the cattle, they went back home with me to Redrock.

"Two years later, I moved with my father and the rest of the family to Mason County. I ranched in Mason County for one year. After that year, I came to the head of the Frio Canyon and brought our herd of cattle. I had about 2,000 head altogether. And that's when I first met John Thompson. My cattle were the first cattle to be ranched on the head of the Frio. There wasn't any roads there then.

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"We stopped on the Frio in October. There were twelve cowboys in/ the outfit and there wasn't a one of us saw a woman we knew until the following Christmas. Well, three of us left the ranch and went to Leakey on Christmas Eve and, of course, we wanted to meet some girls. On the way to Leakey we saw some girls at the Leakey place. At Old Man Leakeys. But we went on down town and fooled around all day and w went back up there to spend the night. Mrs. Leakey told us she was boarding a bunch of school girls and couldn't keep us. She said her son-in-law, J. B. Johnson, who lived three miles on the river had plenty room and would keep us over night. Well, we hadn't seen any girls there at J. B's but we had seen a girl about a mile up the creek at the Huffman place. So to the Huffman place we went and stayed all night. But we never did get to see the girl; she stayed hid.

"The next night we went to Leakey to a dance and et all the girls and danced with them all. There was the Leakey girls, Bowles girls 3 and the Burditt girls. They all danced and I danced with every girl up there. I danced with two girls that night that was their first time to dance. They were Claudie [?] and Bettie Burditt and the latter became my wife several years later.

"One time in 1887 up here on the Guadelupe, we were on a general roundup an we were camped in a draw on a divide at Dr. Orrell's ranch and it came a big rain that night and washed one-half of the pens that we had the cattle in, away and all our bedding. Even the beds we were sleeping on washed away. Me and Bud [?] never got our bed in the wagon — it washed away before we got it in there. Of course, we were very wet. We went up to Orrell's ranch house next morning and were standing around waiting for something to eat and I says to Bud, 'What do you reckon my girl down at Leakey would think if she could see me now?' And after I left, Mrs. Orrell said she wondered if I thought anybody would have me. I was all muddy and wet and beard on my face, so I guess I looked pretty tough. But when I married , Mrs. Orrell was at the wedding, and I told her about it right before the girl I married.

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"In the early [?] when we went out to hunt a deer, we didn't kill the first thing we saw. We rode out and hunted the fattest one. It was just like killing a beef; you hunted for a fat one. And we didn't waste it then like I have seen them waste it. People just went out and killed deer for the hides. They would get from thirty-cents to a dollar for a hide. And they would usually take the [?] and cure them and bring them in by the wagon load. They would sell for about twenty-five cents apiece.

[???] , I came to Sabinal and took a contract to break [?] horses for Mrs. [?] for three dollars a round. There 4 wasn't to be any old horses or any spoiled horses in the bunch. I staked six horses at a time and rode three of them before dinner and three after. I finally got hold of a horse that wouldn't stand on his feet. Every time I got on him he would rear up and fall over backward. I went to the house and told Mrs. Boone I had a horse that had been spoiled. She called her son, Gid Thompson, and asked him about the horse and Gid told her there had been two men tried to break him and couldn't do anything with him. So Mrs. Boone told me I could turn him loose or she could give me double pay to break him which would be six dollars a day. I decided to try 'im. I went out and got on 'im again and he fell back. I held 'im down and hog-tied 'im for three hours. When I let 'im up he came up with me on 'im. He trotted off and never did fall back again. That broke him.

"But talking about the worst horse I ever rode, I bought him from John Thompson at Leahey. I took him with a herd of horses to Kaufman County and sold him. The next year I was back in Kaufman County and a man had this horse in a livery stable. He said the horse had thrown off every man that got on 'im. So they made up twenty-five dollars to got me to ride 'im. I rode 'im two blocks and whipped 'im every jump and he quit pitching so I got the twenty-five dollars.

"I was married to Miss Bettie Burditt in the spring of '89 at the old Burditt home on the Frio. We had a big dance at the court house that night and danced all night.

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"At the time I was married, I had been keeping [?] eight miles above Leakey on the West Frio. I had a small horse and had laid in a supply of pecans and things for my wife to be. I also had a cane patch close by. Well, after I left to get married, a bunch of boys went there and chewed a lot of [?] and spit it all over the floor about a 5 high, and [?] hills were all over the house. Next day, when I took my bride up there, you never saw such a mess as that [?] was in in your life. But we never lived there. We went back to town that evening and Ira Wheat got me to go to work for him in the sheriff's office. I worked for him a year.

"After that year, I bought a place joining Jack Brigeby and built a little lumber house on it and we lived there and ranched for four years. We sold out there then and moved to Sabi Sabinal and have been here most ever since.

"I went to the trail again to the territory in '89 after I was married. With an outfit for Schreiner about 3,000 head of two-year-old steers. We didn't have any trouble with runs but we had a hard trip, it was so dry and grass and water was scare. One time we had to drive two days and nights without stopping and without water. Part of the boys would sleep a little in the wagon while the others were drifting with the herd. Some of the cattle died for the [?] of water. When we reached [?] River, we lost quite a few in the quicksand. But we didn't lose as many as the herds ahead of us. One man lost three-hundred head in one place. He sent word back to us to let the fence down and go on the other side of this quicksand. Well, the owner of this pasture caught us pretty quick after we went over this fence into his pasture. That man was some mad when he caught us in his pasture with those cattle. He threatened to have us arrested. While he was raving and was so mad when he found us in his pasture , Old Man [??] who was with our outfit wanted [?] to let him kill the damn s - b - and throw him in the quicksand. At that time, we had the fever tick down here and he could have made it pretty hard on 6 us if he had wanted to.

"When we got the cattle to water, we turned them a-loose. I guess it was our old Irish cook that saved the day. He was cooking for the outfit and he kept telling Irish stories till he got the old man in a good humor and finally he got down off his horse and ate a little. I was

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foreman of the outfit and after he quieted down and got in a good humor I asked him how much we owed him. He said about fifty dollars so I wrote him out a check for seventy-five dollars and we parted good friends.

"I remember on that trip we found watermellons growing right out on the sand hills in the pasture, in the woods. We ate all we wanted and so did the cattle.

"In 1906. I went to Marathon in charge of Combs' and Kincaid's outfit. We had branded 6,600 calves on this ranch and had sold 2,500 steer yearlings in one straight mark and brand. We/ had gathered the 2,500 steers when the buyer got there with his crew. Got about half of them branded out. One day we had the branded cattle in the pen and were herding the other half out on the range. It came up a little rain storm that night and when it would lighten, I could see the men and cattle all mixed up together. I went to the wagon and got my lantern and waved the hands all in and just let the cattle drift one way. We tied up our horses with the saddles on. Next morning, we had about all the cattle gathered when Billie Kincaid came after the herd and asked me if I expected to turn the cattle a-loose ever time it rained. I told him I expected to do just as I had always done and if he thought someone else could handle it better than I to go ahead and get 'em. Billie said, 'Ed, hold your temper now.' He said he told Mrs. Bell before he left the house he was afraid I hadn't turned them cattle a-loose.

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"I had ten men and the man who was buying had nine. He said when them cattle was turned over to him, he was going to hold 'em. So we finished branding the cattle that day and turned them over to the buyer. That give him nineteen men with the cattle that night. So we had another wind and rain that night and we tried to hold the cattle and got them to running. A year later there was still some of those cattle in that pasture, for they had scattered so in that run we never got all of them back.

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"I stayed at Marathon two years and came back to Sabinal and went into the ranching business. I ranched over here about a year or two and then went to ranching on the Nueces. During the time I was on this ranch I bought a black horse from Mexico. One of the Kirchner boys decided he wanted this horse. I wouldn't trade him the horse until he talked it over with his father first. He laughed and said he thought he surely could ride anything I could ride. He thought I was old and couldn't ride anymore. So finally his father came over with him and they bought the horse. In about three days after that the horse came back to my ranch with the saddle on. He had thrown the boy and came back home. The boy came and got 'im but I don't know whether he ever rode 'im any more or not.

"I remember when I was on that ranch something funny happened. I had been hunting with John Arnold up there sometime before that and John Arnold had gone back in a cave and killed a bear with nothing but a pine torch for a light. And that is one thing I never would do, was to go back in a cave after a bear. Anyway, one day we were riding in the pasture together and I asked Arnold if we could go back to that cave where he killed the bear. He said he thought we could, that it 8 was close by. Well, we went on up there and found the bear's skull in the cave and my boy has that skull today.

"On my last bear hunt, my brother had a fine bear dog called Skinner. He lived on the head of the West Frio. I went up there for a bear hunt with him. So we got out before daylight and old Skinner took a bear trail. We run the bear about three hours and the dog stopped him. My brother shot him and killed him. About the time we got the bear dressed, old Skinner got restless. So my brother said 'It's another bear, let's go.' The country was so rough I had had enough. I told him no that I was going to Sabinal. He went on, and told me later that he got the other bear.

I had a very fine horse here once. I called him Jack. And I was roping wild cattle out on the Woodley ranch. Well, Shep Corzine and John Fenley came to us one day about the time we started a bunch of wild cattle, with a telegram for me. I was trying to beat the cattle to the top of the mountain for there was only a little crooked trail going up the mountain and

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I didn't take time to read the telegram. As I went up the trail, I pushed two cows out of the trail and reached the top of the mountain by the time the lead cattle got there. I roped and tied three wild steers on that one run. They were bad ones too. And if I had been on any other horse I couldn't have done it.

"During this same time, I roped a two-year-old maverick heifer but on a different horse. Maro Woodley came up to where I had the heifer roped, and she was fighting too, believe me. I told Woodley to throw his rope on her and help me get her tied to a tree. He said, 'No, I think you can make it all right.' When I started she made a run at me and my horse run too and the heifer got caught in the rope and broke her neck. He said, 'Oh, that's all right; we need the beef 9 anyway.'

"We caught all the cattle out of that pasture except one out-law steer. We had killed two horses and Albert Nutt went after him later and he didn't take any chances on him so he just shot and killed him.

"Speaking of my good horse, Jack, Randolph Lyell roped a big steer once which was more than he could handle. And if I hadn't been riding one of the best horses in the county, Randolph might have been killed. The steer was trying to hook him off the horse and was lifting up the saddle skirts every jump. I rushed in on Jack and roped the steer and jerked him back. That saved his life, and I know we both owe that to Jack for if it had been any other horse on the ranch, he wouldn't have been as fast as Jack was.

"I roped on this horse all over the country and finally sold him to Sam Blalock. He told me one day he would give me one-hundred-and-fifty dollars for that horse. We went on and finished gathering cattle and he asked me again what I would take for him and I told him two-hundred dollars. He told me he would give me one-hundred and seventy-five. I said, 'You can have him.'

"Sam Blalock said they got up to Kansas and got to cuttin' cattle on him that the horse knew so much more than Lige Flowers, that he just turned him loose and held to the

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saddle horn. Sam sold him to an outfit up there in Kansas. They wanted him just for a cuttin' horse.

“Yes, I have seen mad coyotes. When a coyote is mad, he has a glossy look out of the eye like a mad dog. I have seen lots of them. They walk along and snap at everything that moves, brush or anything else. They will lay down in the shade and rest awhile and when they get up and start off, they will snap at everything that moves. And of course they always slobber at the mouth like a dog. Hydorphobia is the worst 10 thing I ever saw a man have. It must have been about 1910 or 1912 that they had a man over in Uvalde in jail with hydrophobia. He wouldn't let anybody in there uch to doctor him for fear he would hurt them. He came to town and asked to be put in there after this mad coyote bit him. He was in camp above Uvalde and I guess lots of people there remember it. We didn't have the Pasteur treatment then.

“He would just be sitting there quiet as could be and when one of those spells come on him, he would get up and try to tear the jail down. That foam of slobber would string clear to the floor — the awfulest thing you ever saw. He finally died.

“My wife passed away in 1907. We had seven children, one boy and six girls. They are all married now and have homes of their own. They are Jessie, Elizabeth, Mable, Frances and Ned, all of Sabinal. Mary, of Rocksprings and Myra, of Detroit Michigan. Myra is my baby girl. [?] Sue comes to see me every summer and we have some great times when [?] she is here.”

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